

BUDGET & EDUCATION WORKING GROUP
 Constitutional Players
 June 17, 2024

The OPI established the Budget & Education Working Group to gather information from the community and offer feedback that will serve as a resource for the legislature when considering education funding for the 2025 Biennium Budget and 2025 Legislative Session. OPI staff will provide a white paper and summary from the working group for the legislature.

This group is meeting virtually 4 times before September to discuss the budget formula, ongoing budget discussion, and budgeting challenges our schools and community face while educating our students.

WORKING GROUP COMPOSITION:

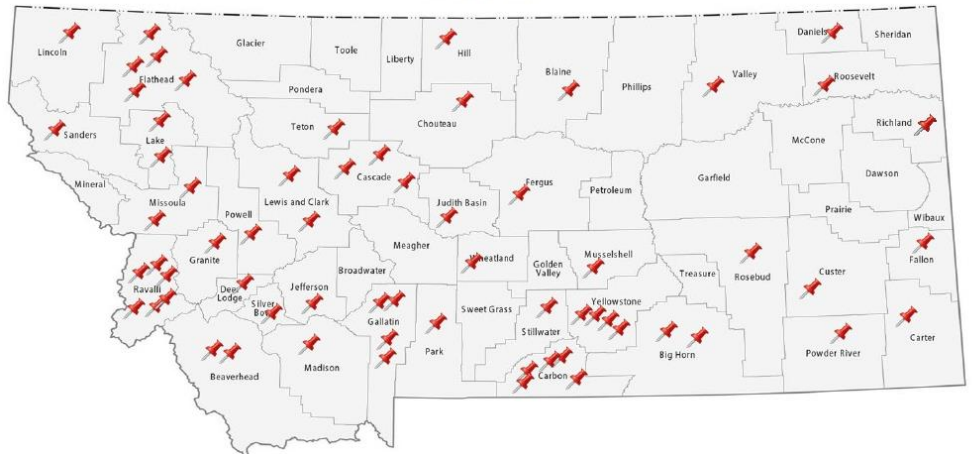
Over 170 Montana teachers, parents, taxpayers, school clerks, and superintendents submitted their names to be a part of the working group. Due to overwhelming interest, there are seven breakout groups based on the areas of interest expressed on the application:

- Special needs students and programs
- Teacher pay, retention, & recruitment.
- Rural, population, & culture
- Sustainability & tax burden
- Programs & curriculum
- Funding formula
- School budgeting



Budget & Education Working Group

As of 4/4/2024



Participating Cities: 64		Participating Counties: 38		
Anaconda - Deer Lodge	Conner - Ravalli	Hardin - Big Horn	Missoula - Missoula	Trego - Lincoln
Avon - Powell	Corvallis - Ravalli	Helena - Lewis & Clark	Plains - Sanders	Ulm - Cascade
Baker - Fallon	Crow Agency - Big Horn	Hobson - Judith Basin	Polson - Lake	West Yellowstone - Yellowstone
Belgrade - Gallatin	Darby - Ravalli	Joliet - Carbon	Poplar - Roosevelt	Whitefish - Flathead
Big Sandy - Chouteau	Dillon - Beaverhead	Kalispell - Flathead	Power - Teton	
Billings - Yellowstone	Drummond - Granite	Lakeside - Flathead	Red Lodge - Carbon	
Bozeman - Gallatin	East Helena - Lewis & Clark	Lame Deer - Rosebud	Roberts - Carbon	
Bridger - Carbon	Ekalaka - Carter	Lewistown - Fergus	Roundup - Musselshell	
Broadus - Powder River	Ennis - Madison	Lima - Beaverhead	Rudyard - Hill	
Butte - Silver Bow	Florence - Ravalli	Livingston - Park	Scobey - Daniels	
Charlo - Lake	Fromberg - Carbon	Lockwood - Yellowstone	Shawmut - Wheatland	
Chinook - Blaine	Gallatin Getaway - Gallatin	Lolo - Missoula	Shepherd - Yellowstone	
Clancy - Jefferson	Glasgow - Valley	Manhattan - Gallatin	Sidney - Richland	
Columbia Falls - Flathead	Great Falls - Cascade	Martin City - Flathead	Simms - Cascade	
Columbus - Stillwater	Hamilton - Ravalli	Miles City - Custer	Stevensville - Ravalli	

WORKING GROUP UPDATES:

The first meeting was held on April 24, 2024. Over 100 members participated in the first meeting where the Budget Formula and ESSER funding was discussed. The second round of the Budget and Education Working Group (BEWG) meetings were held on May 20-23, 2024. The third round of meetings will be held from June 24-27, 2024.

May's discussion focused on identifying challenges facing education in the Working Group members' communities. The upcoming meetings will center on discussing proposed solutions to these identified problems. Some of the most discussed topics included:

- **Teacher recruitment & retention:** What can be done to recruit new teachers and have them stay in Montana; increase teacher pay should be tied to the cost of living; concerns about the cost of healthcare & housing.
- **Inflation pressures:** All goods and services cost more for schools but increases in funding do not mirror the increases in inflation; utilities and insurance costs have increased; costs to maintain building and facilities has increased substantially- deferred maintenance.
- **ANB funding formula:** Funding for schools is focused on student enrollment; there should be a focus on the number of teachers and staff needed for the school not just the number of students.
- **Special Education:** It is hard to find qualified teachers; funding does not adequately take into account the amount of services kids need; demand for special education services has increased.

The third round of meetings will be held from June 24-27, 2024. For upcoming meetings, agendas, previous meeting recordings, and summary pages, please visit opi.mt.gov/Home/BEWG.

For more information, please contact Katie Bloodgood, Legislative Liaison, at katie.bloodgood@mt.gov.